

ATRAZINE

Also known as: Atrex, Atranex, Gesaprim, Primatol, Purge, Vectro SC, Cristina
Chemical reference number (CAS): 1912-24-9

WHAT IS ATRAZINE?

Atrazine is a white crystal solid. Farmers have used it widely as a weed killer on corn fields since the early 1960s. In 1985, 77% of the acres of field corn and 49% of the acres of sweet corn in Wisconsin were treated with atrazine.

A recent survey of rural Wisconsin wells found widespread atrazine contamination. In most cases, the amounts detected did not pose a serious risk to health. However, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection has taken action to reduce atrazine use to prevent any more groundwater contamination.

HOW ARE PEOPLE EXPOSED TO ATRAZINE?

Most people are exposed to atrazine when they manufacture, distribute, mix or use the herbicide. People who live in rural areas may be exposed to low levels through their drinking water.

Breathing: Rural residents may inhale dust or mists during field applications of atrazine. If their water supply is contaminated, they could breathe atrazine as they cook, bathe, or do laundry.

Drinking/Eating: People who have contaminated drinking water may be exposed to low levels of atrazine. Some low-level exposure to atrazine may occur when treated crops are eaten or handled. Topsoil may contain traces of atrazine for several months after field applications of atrazine. People who handle contaminated soil could ingest traces of the herbicide if they eat or touch their mouths with dirty hands.

Touching: Atrazine is not readily absorbed through the skin.

DO STANDARDS EXIST FOR REGULATING ATRAZINE?

Water: The state and federal drinking water standards for atrazine are both set at 3 parts per billion (ppb). We suggest you stop drinking water that contains more than 3 ppb of atrazine. If levels of atrazine are very high (greater than 100 ppb) in your water, you may also need to avoid washing, bathing, or using the water for other purposes. Contact your local public health agency for more information specific to your situation.

Air: No standards exist for the amount of atrazine allowed in the air of homes

WILL EXPOSURE TO ATRAZINE RESULT IN HARMFUL HEALTH EFFECTS?

Eye or skin irritation may occur immediately or shortly after handling atrazine.

Short-term, low-level exposure to atrazine is unlikely to cause health problems.

The following health effects can occur after several years of exposure to atrazine:

Cancer: Based on animal feeding studies, atrazine has been classified as a “possible” cancer-causing agent. Long-term exposure may increase a women’s risk of breast cancer.

Reproductive Effects: Atrazine has not been linked to reproductive problems in humans.

Organ Systems: Animal feeding studies indicate that exposure to high levels of atrazine over a long period of time causes tremors and heart and liver damage. However, these effects have not been seen in humans. Atrazine can cause a skin allergy. If an allergy develops, future contact with low levels of atrazine can cause itching and redness.

In general, chemicals affect the same organ systems in all people who are exposed. However, the seriousness of the effects may vary from person to person.

A person's reaction depends on several things, including individual health, heredity, previous exposure to chemicals including medicines, and personal habits such as smoking or drinking.

It is also important to consider the length of exposure to the chemical; the amount of chemical exposure; and whether the chemical was inhaled, touched, or eaten.

CAN A MEDICAL TEST DETERMINE EXPOSURE TO ATRAZINE?

No specific medical test is recommended following brief, low-level exposures. High-level exposures may require medical treatment right away.

If a person continues to have symptoms after atrazine exposure is stopped, their physician should look for other toxic chemicals that may be causing the symptoms.

Seek medical advice if you have any symptoms that you think may be related to chemical exposure.

This fact sheet summarizes information about this chemical and is not a complete listing of all possible effects. It does not refer to work exposure or emergency situations

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Poison Control Center, 800-815-8855
- Your local public health agency
- Division of Public Health, BEH, 1 West Wilson Street, Rm. 150, Madison, WI 53701-2659, (608) 266-1120 or Internet: <http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/eh>



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